

REMARKS

Claims 1-35 are pending in the present application. In the Office Action dated November 21, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 14, 17, 18, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,485,247 to Groves, *et al.* ("Groves"). The Examiner further rejected claims 3, 4 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Groves. Claims 5, 6, 16 and 26 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Groves in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,565 to Gesuale ("Gesuale"). Claims 9, 10, 19, 20 and 29 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Groves in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,690,606 to Ross ("Ross"). Claims 32, 33 and 35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Groves in view of Applicants' Admitted Prior Art ("AAPA"). Finally, claim 34 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Groves in view of AAPA and further in view of Gesuale.

The Examiner has also objected to claims 11-13 and 21-23 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that the foregoing claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner is thanked for his careful examination of the present application and for his indication of allowable subject matter. Applicants nevertheless disagree with the stated grounds of rejection and desire to further clarify various distinctions of the present invention over the cited art. Reconsideration of the present application is therefore requested in light of the present amendment and following remarks.

The disclosed embodiments of the present invention will now be discussed in comparison to the prior art. It is understood, however, that any discussion of the disclosed embodiments, as well as any discussion of the differences between the disclosed embodiments of the present invention and the prior art do not define the scope or interpretation of any of the claims. Instead, such discussed differences, when presented, are offered merely to help the Examiner appreciate important claim distinctions as they are discussed.

With reference to Figure 1 of the present application, an engine loader and transport assembly 100 according to an embodiment of the invention is shown. Briefly, and in general terms, the assembly 100 includes a generally U-shaped support frame 111 that at least partially encloses a working space 104. The working space is configured to receive an engine support 158 that supports an aircraft engine 150. When the engine support 158 is positioned within the working space 104, the coupling assemblies 122 may be translated inwardly and into the working space 104 to engage the engine support 158 prior to lifting the support 158. Additionally, the coupling assemblies 122 may be translated along the support frame 111. The Examiner is directed to page 7, lines 5-8 for this disclosure. Applicants therefore maintain that the coupling assemblies 122 may be selectively translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface and also coupleable to the aircraft engine assembly.

The Examiner has cited the Groves reference as pertinent to the patentability of claims in the present application. Groves discloses an uplift loader configured to position an aircraft engine into a suitable position relative to an aircraft structure so that the engine may be mounted and/or dismounted from the aircraft structure.

With reference now to Figure 1 of the Groves reference, an uplift loader 10 includes a generally U-shaped frame assembly 16 having an opening 18 that is configured to admit a shipping cradle that supports an aircraft engine. The loader 10 includes lifting devices 22 that are configured to translate upper ends 26 upwardly and away from the frame assembly 16. Coupling assemblies (shown as the cables 50 in Figure 3) are removably coupled to the upper ends 26 and to attachment points on the shipping cradle so that as the lifting devices 22 are translated upwardly, the engine is moved into a desired mounting position on the aircraft.

Applicants therefore understand the Groves reference to disclose a loader that includes lifting devices that translate perpendicular to the frame assembly, which rests on a horizontal floor surface. Coupling assemblies, which are described as cables, extend between upper ends of the lifting assemblies to couple the lifting assemblies to the cradle. Applicants find no relevant

teaching in the Groves reference that suggests that the coupling assemblies may be translated in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the supporting floor surface.

The Examiner has also cited the Gesuale reference as pertinent to the patentability of the present claims. With reference to Figure 1 of Gesuale, applicants note that the disclosed apparatus 10 includes tongues 18 that extend inwardly into an open area between leg portions 14 that suitably engage a pallet or other bulk material container. The tongues 18 are "...pivotably mounted to the fork-like legs 14...and pivot horizontally about a vertical axis..." (col. 5, lines 27-34). Applicants find no relevant disclosure or suggestion that the tongues 18 may be translated in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the supporting floor surface. Instead, Gesuale teaches *rotational* movement of the tongues 18.

The Examiner has also cited the Ross reference for disclosing "scissor-lift" devices, and an "upper deck" assembly incorporated into a mobile loading device. Applicants similarly can find no relevant teaching or suggestion that the mobile loading device includes coupling assemblies that may be selectively translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface and also coupleable to a payload.

Finally, the Examiner has also cited Applicant's Admitted Prior Art (AAPA) as pertinent. Applicants, however, can find no relevant teaching or suggestion in the AAPA that a loading device includes coupling assemblies that may be selectively translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface.

Turning now to the claims, differences between the claim language and the applied art will be specifically pointed out. Claim 1, as amended, recites in pertinent part: "An engine loader and transport assembly adapted to engage an aircraft engine assembly...comprising...a motorized drive assembly engageable with a floor surface...[and] an engagement unit positioned proximate the drive assembly and partially surrounding a working space, *the engagement unit including a pair of coupling assemblies positioned on opposing lateral sides of the working space that are adapted to be selectively translatable in at least one direction that is*

approximately parallel to the floor surface...” (Emphasis added). As discussed in greater detail above, the Groves reference does not disclose or fairly suggest this. Accordingly, claim 1 is allowable over the cited art. Claims depending from claim 1 are also allowable based upon the allowability of the base claim and further in view of the additional limitations recited in the dependent claims.

Claim 14, as amended, recites in pertinent part: “A facility for performing at least one of manufacturing and servicing an aircraft, comprising...a floor surface...and...an engine handling assembly adapted to engage an aircraft engine assembly, the engine handling assembly including...a motorized drive assembly engageable with the floor surface...[and]...an engagement unit positioned proximate the drive assembly and partially surrounding a working space, *the engagement unit including a pair of coupling assemblies positioned on opposing lateral sides of the working space that are translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface and selectively coupleable to the aircraft engine assembly when the aircraft engine assembly is positioned at least partially within the working space...*” (Emphasis added). Again, the Groves reference does not disclose or fairly suggest this. Claim 14 is therefore also allowable over the cited art. Claims depending from claim 14 are also allowable based upon the allowability of the base claim and further in view of the additional limitations recited in the dependent claims.

Claim 24, as amended, recites in pertinent part: “A method of attaching an aircraft engine, comprising...positioning an airframe of the aircraft on a floor surface...providing an aircraft engine assembly...providing an engine handling assembly having a motorized drive assembly and an engagement unit operatively coupled to the motorized drive assembly, the drive assembly and the engagement unit being adapted to partially surround a working space, the engagement unit including a pair of coupling assemblies positioned on opposing lateral sides of the working space, wherein the coupling assemblies are translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface...” (Emphasis added).

Finally, claim 32, as amended, recites in pertinent part: "A method of servicing an engine assembly of an aircraft, comprising...positioning the aircraft on a floor surface...[and]...providing an engine handling assembly having a motorized drive assembly and an engagement unit operatively coupled to the motorized drive assembly, the drive assembly and the engagement unit being adapted to partially surround a working space, the engagement unit including a pair of coupling assemblies positioned on opposing lateral sides of the working space, wherein the coupling assemblies are translatable in at least one direction that is approximately parallel to the floor surface..." (Emphasis added). Yet again, the Groves reference simply does not disclose or fairly suggest this. Accordingly, claim 32 is also allowable over the cited art. Claims depending from claim 32 are also allowable based upon the allowability of the base claim and further in view of the additional limitations recited in the dependent claims.

With respect to the Examiner's rejections based upon 35 U.S.C. §103(a), applicants respectfully assert that the foregoing claim amendments fully address the stated grounds for rejection.

For the foregoing reasons, applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application and a Notice of Allowance. If there are any remaining matters that may be handled telephonically, the Examiner is kindly invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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